



Commerce and NOAA announce corrective actions to improve accountability in budgeting and finance

1 message

Dr. Jane Lubchenco <announcement@noaa.gov>

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May 25, 2012

Hello everyone,

I would like to let everyone know about information that is being released today regarding an internal investigation on the reprogramming of funds without appropriate Congressional notification within the National Weather Service (NWS) and about the actions I and the rest of NOAA leadership are taking to address these problems.

This past December, following a preliminary investigation that was triggered by a complaint from within the NWS to the Inspector General, the Department of Commerce and NOAA leadership launched an investigation into existing budget practices within NWS. This investigation, which focused on FY 2010 and FY 2011, was completed on Friday May 11. The investigation found that government employees engaged in the reprogramming of funds without Congressional notification as required by the applicable Federal Appropriations Act. The investigation also found that no funds were spent on inappropriate items, they were simply spent in different categories than originally budgeted, and there was no corruption or personal financial gain in these actions. The Department of Commerce leadership, NOAA leadership, and I believe this is a very serious matter that must be addressed.

Today I am issuing a decision memo outlining corrective actions and measures to prevent inappropriate budgeting and accounting in the future. NOAA will be submitting a reprogramming package to Congress for FY 2012. I have also directed staff to initiate an independent financial and programmatic audit of NWS back to 2006. Concurrently, the Department of Commerce is releasing a decision memo initiating department-wide actions to bring more rigor and transparency to the budget formulation and execution process at the sub-bureau level. The Department will also initiate actions to provide more training to managers on appropriations law and appropriate ways to address complaints in a timely and appropriate manner. If you have ideas for how to improve current processes or know of agency procedures that could benefit from additional training, please contact your Assistant Administrator so that these ideas can be considered in this process going forward.

I know we all consider carrying out NOAA's mission our great responsibility. NWS officials acted improperly, but let me assure you, life and property were not put at risk and weather forecasts and warnings were not compromised. I would like to commend the people within the NWS who reported this problem in the first place and encourage staff to remain vigilant about reporting real problems you see in the course of your work.

In this case, only a few people acted inappropriately, but their actions affect each of us, and they harm NOAA's reputation and our ability to deliver on our critically important mission. NOAA is comprised of outstanding staff in every line office, which is why we must all redouble

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our efforts to ensure that this does not happen again. All of us at NOAA take great pride in the services we deliver to the nation, and I know that you will continue to deliver these critical services every day.

I am counting on everyone to do your part in moving the agency forward by helping to improve transparency and accountability, continuing to report problems as they arise, and continuing to pursue and deliver high-quality NOAA science and services. In return, I will do everything I can to promote and support your hard work and dedication and advance the mission of our agency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jane Lubchenco".

Dr. Jane

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